United Nations A/C.1/51/PV.8

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-first Session

First Committee

8th Meeting
Friday, 18 October 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Sychou ..... (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 60 to 81 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On behalf of the States of the United Arab Emirates, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee and to wish you and the other members of the Bureau every possible success in your work.

At the end of the cold war, mankind had hoped that the international community would pursue its work and redouble its efforts for the containment and peaceful settlement of conflicts and for consistency and balance between the objectives of disarmament, on the one hand, and international peace and security on the other. What we are seeing today, however, is the escalation of civil and regional conflicts and the persistence of foreign occupations, ethnic cleansing, drug trafficking and the illicit traffic in weapons of mass destruction. Contributing to the widening economic and social gap between the developed and the developing States, these phenomena in no way help to further the aspirations of the peoples of the world to a new international economic order that is both equitable and just and that could serve as a solid and reliable foundation for peace, security, stability and development throughout the world.

Member States have an ongoing commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter and the norms of international law, which are founded on total and mutual respect for the territorial integrity and political systems of other States and non-interference in their internal affairs; the non-use of force; and the peaceful settlement of conflicts through negotiations. Adherence to these principles requires States fully to honour the primacy of law and the principles of the Charter. Consequently, the international community should not be duped by the declared policies of certain States with respect to peace and security in their region when those same States seek in fact to stockpile prohibited weapons and to create new nuclear reactors that threaten destruction both in times of peace and in times of war. For 40 years the Middle East, particularly the Arab Gulf region, has suffered wars and destructive conflicts, the serious consequences of which have affected peace, security, stability and progress in the economic, social and humanitarian fields.

The United Arab Emirates recently signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and last year signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the context of international efforts to promote the universality of those two Treaties. We have also welcomed the long-term multilateral efforts of all parties to achieve a broad consensus on the question of nuclear disarmament and the international non-proliferation regime. This consensus recently resulted, as the Secretary-General points out in his report, in the accession of the five nuclear-weapon States to the Protocol to the Treaty of Rarotonga establishing the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, which made them full parties to that Treaty.

Quite recently, these efforts also led to the conclusion of two regional treaties establishing new nuclear-weapon-

96-86564 (E)

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

free zones in South-East Asia and Africa. Thus, the international community has succeeded in turning the entire southern hemisphere into a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

These regional arrangements in the field of transparency in disarmament are indeed positive and constructive steps towards building confidence among States and maintaining international peace and security. We therefore hope that the efforts of the international community to turn the other hemisphere into a nuclear-free zone as well will enjoy every success, particularly in the Middle East and the Arab Gulf region which for some time now have suffered conflicts and wars because Israel possesses prohibited weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. This is at variance with principles of the Middle East peace process, international resolutions and the principle of "land for peace", the aims of which cannot be achieved without the establishment of a perfect political and military balance between all the States of the region.

All the Arab States have acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The international community must therefore demand that Israel, the only nuclear-weapon State in the region, also accede to the Treaty, submit all its nuclear installations to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards regime and take specific steps to create a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and their delivery systems in the Middle East.

The indiscriminate and abusive use of landmines, whose dangers are not necessarily confined to war situations and persist long after conflicts have been settled, is one of the greatest humanitarian problems, sowing such grief and misfortune in our societies. Therefore, we support international efforts to conclude an international convention establishing a total ban on the production, development, stockpiling and use of these weapons. Similarly, the continued existence of stocks of prohibited fissile material for the production of prohibited nuclear weapons and of the illicit traffic in weapons of mass destruction, particularly biological and chemical weapons, remains a source of deep concern and threatens the stability and security of countries and entire regions.

The Disarmament Commission has proved its effectiveness as an active authority in controlling these instruments of destruction and reducing their threat to the economies, security and development of peoples, their impact on the environment and especially their role in spreading ethnic and civilian conflicts when in the possession of the States or other entities involved in such conflicts.

The United Arab Emirates welcomed the initiative to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and related security matters before the end of the year 2000 and reaffirms that control of the arms race requires that the mandate of the Disarmament Commission be strengthened, that the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament be expanded so that its objectives also include the establishment of rules governing a State's possession of sophisticated weapons; and that the production, stockpiling and use of, or traffic in, prohibited materials be brought under effective and strict international control.

I take this opportunity to emphasize the importance of the Advisory Opinion recently handed down by the International Court of Justice, which underscores the position of international law with respect to the illegality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons in conflicts between States. In the same context, we believe that the role of the Court must also be strengthened and expanded to cover the settlement of ongoing regional conflicts.

Regional and international arms races and military expenditure do not merely threaten international peace and security and the stability of States; they also absorb tremendous amounts of national economic and financial resources, particularly in the developing countries that so sorely need those resources to achieve their aspirations to economic and social development. Despite our understanding that regional conflicts and problems have specific political, social, security and ethnic dimensions, the final settlement of these problems requires political will and the building of confidence between States, particularly neighbouring States, so as to contribute to the establishment of regional zones of peace, security, stability and prosperity.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): Mr. Chairman, please accept my delegation's congratulations on your election. We look forward very much to working closely with you.

This has been a significant year on the disarmament calendar. The international community achieved a long-standing goal with the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) just three weeks ago. Despite the difficulty of the negotiations, we have now established a global norm against nuclear testing. That is a matter of great satisfaction to my delegation and

indeed to the whole South Pacific region. It is a far cry from where we were just one year ago.

New Zealand hopes that the already large number of signatures will be swelled by many more in the weeks to come and that early ratifications will be followed by entry into force without delay. As we work towards entry into force, we would urge all countries to value the Treaty for what it is: both an end to testing in itself and a step on the road to nuclear disarmament. A measured and logical approach to the Preparatory Commission process, which we shall be working on here in New York in coming weeks, will emphasize both these aspects of the CTBT.

The overwhelming desire of humankind for a world free of nuclear weapons is clear. In the past few months, it has been reinforced by the unanimous finding of the International Court of Justice that there is indeed an obligation to pursue and conclude negotiations leading to complete nuclear disarmament. We hope that this Committee is able to reaffirm that obligation.

But we must also act to fulfil the obligation. Since June this year, we have been pleased to take part in the deliberations of the Conference on Disarmament as a full member. The recent announcement that New Zealand intends to appoint a full-time Disarmament Ambassador to the Conference will further enhance our participation.

We are, however, disappointed that so far there has been no agreement on an updated agenda for the Conference on Disarmament which responds to current realities. We hope that, next year, it will be possible to reach a consensus on a comprehensive agenda, including a start to discussions on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, as well as on issues relating to conventional weapons.

While a start to negotiations on a convention on nuclear weapons may not yet be within reach, there are a number of intermediate steps which we can take to move forward. The Canberra Commission rightly identifies bilateral and multilateral measures alike as having a contribution to make and, in this context, we would urge the Russian Federation to ratify START II as soon as possible. That would enable negotiations on a third START treaty to get under way — in our view, preferably including all five nuclear-weapon States. That would be to the benefit of all of us. The alternative to a world without nuclear weapons is not the status quo but increasing dangers of nuclear proliferation.

In 1993, the Assembly reached a consensus that negotiations on a cut-off convention should begin. Last year's Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) agreed that an early conclusion to negotiations on cut-off was an important element in a programme of action aimed at achieving nuclear disarmament. With the CTBT now concluded, it is time for the Conference on Disarmament to take up this issue in earnest. As my colleague from South Africa noted in his statement, New Zealand and South Africa have agreed on the significance of this step.

A convention banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons would be an important move forward and could in turn be complemented by a register of fissile-material stocks and by a verifiable ban on production of new nuclear weapons. In the meantime, New Zealand would see value in the declaration of formal moratoriums on production by all countries producing fissionable material for nuclear weapons.

The NPT principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament also signalled the desire of many States to see security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States given the form of a legally binding instrument. The importance many, including New Zealand, attach to such a legal commitment has been underscored in the past year by the progress made in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. In December 1995, the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty was opened for signature in Bangkok and signed by 10 countries of the region. In April of this year, the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty was also opened for signature. In my own region, France, the United Kingdom and the United States signed the Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga. France has also followed China and Russia in ratifying the Protocols.

These are developments that New Zealand very much welcomes. Taken together, the four nuclear-weapon-free zone Treaties represent the aspirations of nearly two thirds of the membership of this Assembly to be free of nuclear weapons. New Zealand, like a number of other countries party to a nuclear-weapon-free zone treaty, would like to build on that common objective. We have, accordingly, co-sponsored a resolution urging further cooperation between zone members to consolidate efforts that have made over half the world, including most of the southern hemisphere, nuclear free. We take this opportunity to thank Brazil for leading on this initiative and commend the text to the representatives to this Committee.

In addition to the work of the Conference on Disarmament, my delegation believes that there are two key processes which can contribute to the achievement of consensus on nuclear disarmament measures. One is the enhanced review of the NPT, a process which should get under way next year. That enhanced review was an important part of the agreement to extend the NPT indefinitely and we need to take it seriously. Practical and constructive outcomes to each of the Preparatory Committees will in turn enable us to build on the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agreed in 1995 and move both to full implementation of the provisions of the NPT, including article VI, and to universality.

The other process which New Zealand sees as having potential significance for all aspects of the disarmament agenda is the preparation for and holding of a fourth special session on disarmament. New Zealand hopes that this Committee will be able to reach agreement on a date for a fourth United Nations special session on disarmament so that formal preparations can get underway.

The deposit of the sixty-fifth ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is not far away. The entry into force of this treaty will be a historic achievement. Not only have we outlawed these terrible weapons but, under the Convention, a system will be set up to ensure that parties comply with their obligations. Verification is an essential element in any undertaking to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction; we must have confidence that the obligations of the CWC are in fact being met.

The Biological Weapons Convention, the first treaty to outlaw an entire class of weapons, does not have such a verification system. We place great importance on the process currently under way to develop means of strengthening the Convention in order to correct this deficiency, and we welcome the progress made so far. We look forward to the intensification of Ad Hoc Group negotiations in the coming year. There can be no doubt as to the urgency of this work. The findings of the United Nations Special Commission in Iraq should remind us that the threat is a very real one.

We should not, however, let an understandable preoccupation with the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction prevent us from addressing ways and means to reduce the risk posed by conventional arms. In multilateral disarmament discussions, it could be said that conventional-arms issues are the poor relation. While these weapons do not have the same destructive power as nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, they extract an appalling toll around the world and their proliferation can be destabilizing.

Some regions of the world have made better progress than others in addressing the problem of proliferation. At the international level, we have made a start, albeit tentative. Transparency is an obvious and essential first step along the road to addressing the massive proliferation of conventional arms. In this context, New Zealand has been pleased to see the growing acceptance of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a means of promoting transparency and building confidence. We particularly welcome the strong support the Register has received from the Asia-Pacific region.

It is now time to look at the further development of the Register. In this context, the upcoming review of the Register by the group of experts will be important. We would like to see the scope of the Register expanded, with provision made for the inclusion of information on military holdings and procurement through national production. An effort to ensure that the information provided is of high quality would also be welcome. We recognize that progress may not be quick, but it will be important to ensure in the coming years that the Register not only maintains but also builds on the profile that it has achieved.

While the process of reviewing the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons did produce some useful advances, New Zealand attaches considerable importance to the early achievement of a total ban on landmines. We have accordingly co-sponsored the draft resolution put forward by the United States on this issue, which we hope will attract widespread support. We were pleased to have the opportunity in Ottawa, only a fortnight ago, to contribute to thinking on how a total ban might best be achieved.

There is much for the Committee to discuss. The issues are complex and in many cases difficult. But we should not allow that to become an excuse to retreat into hard-line positions.

The international community needs to develop realistic steps towards the goals that have been identified. Let no one doubt New Zealand's commitment to taking those steps.

Mr. Sacirbey (Bosnia and Herzegovina): First allow me, Sir, to offer you my congratulations on your assumption of the well-earned leadership position of this Committee. I also congratulate the other members of the

Bureau. My delegation pledges its full support for and cooperation with the efforts of the Committee.

May I also associate my delegation with the statements of the two previous speakers — the Permanent Representatives of the United Arab Emirates and of New Zealand — and in particular, with those aspects of the statements emphasizing expansion of arms-control regimes and enhanced verification and transparency mechanisms.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is keenly aware of the significance of arms control and the effects that imbalances of military assets have on international peace and security, as well as on confidence and perception between neighbouring States. We understand and appreciate first hand the deliberations of the First Committee, as we have uniquely experienced and continue to experience the effects of war, having endured the massive use of conventional weapons against non-military targets and continuing as we do to live with the horrors of anti-personnel landmines.

I would like to take this opportunity to bring the First Committee up to date on a most relevant issue regarding arms control, particularly in regard to the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement. As the Committee may know, under Annex 1-B of the Agreement, the parties have agreed to a regional stabilization arms-control regime. The details of this agreement on subregional arms control were negotiated in Vienna and eventually completed in Florence. This arms-control Agreement is a key part of a two-pronged approach to creating regional military stability that will solidify and secure the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, we may say, in the region.

At this time, the measures agreed to, in the letter, under the Vienna and Florence negotiations and, in the spirit, under the Dayton/Paris Agreement have begun to yield their first results. However, the monitoring mechanisms and the regular and accurate reporting on all aspects of the Agreement are a necessary prerequisite to full implementation of the Agreement. Some recent experiences are giving rise to doubts as to the approaches that some parties may be taking toward this Agreement. It seems that they are not cooperating in good faith in reporting armament levels and are not pursuing the destruction of armaments as required.

Still, we are deeply convinced that it is to the benefit of all in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as to all in the region to approach this segment of the Peace Agreement fully and consistently and to provide transparency while dealing with this most sensitive and important issue.

In this context, we would urge those regional organizations and individual countries which have information on the true armament levels of the parties to be forthcoming with the General Assembly, with the parties and with the international community as a whole regarding this information. Misrepresentations of facts on the ground do not enhance confidence-building goals or regional stability and could in fact have the exact opposite effect. My Government intends to live up fully to its commitments under the Dayton/Paris Agreement's subregional arms-control Agreement and calls upon all other parties to the Agreement to do the same.

My delegation takes particular note of and welcomes the statement of the Irish delegation on behalf of the European Union, which stressed the importance of this Agreement, and I can only reinforce the importance of this Agreement in regional security and, indeed, international stability, peace and security.

Bosnia and Herzegovina also believes that a necessary condition for arms control is transparency. It is for this reason that our delegation will join in the calls for supporting the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. There can be no arms control without transparency and, of course, verification. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, this transparency translates into confidence-building, both within the country itself and between neighbouring States. Bosnia and Herzegovina calls upon all its regional neighbours to approach military issues in a transparent manner so as to diminish and eliminate mistrust, misperception and potentially deadly mistakes. In this way, our neighbourhood of south-eastern Europe will be a much more stable and ultimately safer place.

Of course, the second issue of utmost importance to Bosnia and Herzegovina is that of anti-personnel landmines. More than three million of these deadly devices litter our homeland. Their continued presence plays a role in impeding the return of refugees, freedom of movement and economic reconstruction — factors on which the relative peace in my country depends.

My delegation welcomes the convening of the Ottawa Conference and is hopeful that, sooner or later, a similar international conference will be held to sign a comprehensive international agreement banning anti-personnel landmines. In this light, we will do everything within our power to work with those States which are committed to the earliest possible ratification of amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

While we stress that the issue of the production, sale, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel landmines is the core of the problem, we would suggest that an equally important aspect of the mine issue is the location, removal and destruction of existing landmines.

It is in this context that my delegation calls for the sharing of information in mine-removal technology and techniques. Developing and economically poorer countries simply cannot afford the expenditures or the time required to establish research and development mechanisms beginning from scratch and there is no reason that small States should be forced to do so. Too often, they too also cannot afford to retain the foreign, expensive firms with the necessary advanced technology. My delegation would suggest that there should be some consideration given to the establishment of an international database and/or assistance mobilization group on mine-clearance technology and techniques.

We would also like to add that, if we are truly to attack the tragic problems of landmines, technical assistance should be geared towards a "train the trainer" approach. Only in this way can long-term solutions be found for today's real and deadly problems for the people of the world who every day feel the loss and tragedy caused by anti-personnel landmines. We see evidence of this approach in Bosnia and Herzegovina and believe that it will, in the longer term, prove itself most effective.

Allow me to underline that in our discussions we must not forget the victims of landmines. Technology and techniques in the fields of rehabilitation and education also need to be shared, both for the individual victims' sake and for the sake of society at large. In this way, the innocent victims of the landmine scourge will be able to function as essential members of society. Education in the dangers and presence of landmines through mine-awareness and other programmes can also serve to prevent further casualties due to landmines.

President Izetbegović, in his address to the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, stressed that Bosnia and Herzegovina is fully committed to the principles of international peace and security and believes that international arms control regimes are a necessary and positive tool in making the world a better and safer place. For this reason, we have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and will participate together with the other States signatories in the work of the Preparatory Commission for the full implementation of this important international instrument. We also are supportive of the Chemical Weapons Convention and hope to make a positive contribution to its ratification when we are able to do so. And we pledge the same in regard to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

Let me point out once again the utmost importance of the aforementioned agreement in relation to arms control arrangements and transparency in our own region. This is one of the crucial issues for ensuring that the tragic experiences of the past four years will not be repeated again, and that the relative peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in our region will be secured and enhanced.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Our warm congratulations go to you, Sir, on your unanimous election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. Our felicitations go also to the other members of the Bureau of this important Committee which is charged with heavy responsibilities in the context of the recent developments in the field of disarmament and international security.

We are meeting here this year against the backdrop of a possibly unprecedented momentum in the efforts at disarmament. Progress towards disarmament in the past couple of years in all four categories of weapons — atomic, biological, chemical and conventional — in our assessment, has been significant, and even substantial, if we take into account its far-reaching implications.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, we recognize three distinct developments which have taken place since the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

At the global level, the endorsement of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the General Assembly and its signature by a majority of Member States, including all major nuclear Powers, is a historic achievement. We do not consider the CTBT as an end in itself, but we recognize it as a significant step towards nuclear non-proliferation.

At the regional level, real progress has been made in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. After Antarctica, the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean and also the South Pacific have become zones free from nuclear weapons. There has been significant progress in establishing nuclear-free zones in Africa and South-East

Asia. These achievements should serve as encouragement particularly for all concerned in the Middle East and South Asia to free those regions of nuclear weapons.

In the bilateral context, the Framework Agreement between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States of America, and the transfer of nuclear weapons from Belarus and Ukraine to the Russian Federation, are developments with far-reaching implications.

Apart from these, there have also been two other important developments from the global perspective. First is the historic Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, to which reference has been made by the Secretary-General, by you yourself, Mr. Chairman, and by several delegations. We urge all concerned to take due cognizance of the ruling of the world Court and pursue without delay negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects. The second development is the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. In our view, the report merits serious and thorough consideration by the international community on the following grounds: First, it demythifies the perceived strategic and political utility of nuclear weapons. Secondly, it reveals not only the risks of illicit transfers of nuclear weapons or fissile materials to terrorist and sub-national Groups, but also the horrendous reality of the serious risk of nuclear-weapon accidents any time. The indefinite deployment of the weapons, the report underlines, carries a high risk of their ultimate use through accident or inadvertence. We are also told that about 100 accidents were reported between 1945 and 1980 which damaged nuclear weapons and could have caused unintended detonation. A nuclear-weapons accident, needless to say, would not be on a Chernobyl scale. Thirdly, it establishes beyond any controversy the case for a nuclear-free world. And, finally, it recommends pragmatic step-by-step measures to achieve complete global nuclear disarmament. It is therefore our view that the conclusions and recommendations of the Commission should legitimately be taken up for consideration by the entire international community, since these weapons concern the whole of humanity — or rather, threaten its very existence.

As the Committee is aware, the Group of 28 submitted a draft resolution at the Conference on Disarmament, proposing a phased elimination of nuclear weapons. Bangladesh, as a member of the Conference on Disarmament, has been involved in the elaboration of the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons. We have noted with regret differences of views as to the appropriate forum for negotiation of nuclear disarmament. We hope that the report of the Canberra Commission and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice will act as an impetus for building world opinion and facilitating the early start of these negotiations.

Bangladesh is a non-nuclear State party to the NPT, and its commitment to nuclear disarmament goes far beyond the provisions of the CTBT. We therefore supported the endorsement of the Treaty by the General Assembly, and we intend to become a signatory to the Treaty soon. However, as a least-developed country, we are finding it difficult to meet the financial obligations of our signing the CTBT, which reaffirms part of a broader commitment already made by us in the context of the NPT. We have therefore noted with interest the suggestions made by some delegations at the Conference on Disarmament on the question of meeting verification and overhead costs. We also feel that there is a need to take a fresh look at the issue. Options that we envisage could include the following: first, nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT, which are already bound by a broader and more stringent regime than that envisaged in the CTBT, and which would therefore be parties to the Treaty only to impart a universal character to the CTBT, could be exempted from any financial obligation. Secondly, least-developed countries could be required to bear only part of the fixed administrative cost of the CTBT, calculated at United Nations rates. No assessment may be applicable either for the standing International Monitoring System or for regular verification costs. Finally, since non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT would not in effect be making any new commitment under the CTBT, they may be considered to have automatically acceded to the CTBT, and may not be counted towards the entry into force of the CTBT. They may be considered parties to the Treaty while outside it, and could therefore be exempted from any cost-sharing burden under the CTBT.

As for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, Bangladesh welcomes the progress made by the Ad Hoc Group of States Parties to the Convention in elaborating a protocol providing for a legally binding effective verification regime.

As for Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, Bangladesh was among the first to sign it; although we have no chemical-weapons programme or facilities, we are completing the procedures

for its ratification. But, as we all are aware, ratification of the Convention without the major chemical-weapons countries would have little meaning. In the meantime, we hope that the unilateral destruction by the United States of its chemical weapons stockpile would act as encouragement to others to eliminate this abhorrent weapon.

In the field of conventional weapons, and in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the adoption of Protocol II on Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Such Devices and Additional Protocol IV on anti-personnel blinding laser weapons, have been significant achievements. We commend the unilateral decisions taken by a number of countries enforcing moratoriums or bans on the production and export of such weapons and even destruction of existing stockpiles. We join others in expressing thanks to the Government of Canada for convening the international meeting on a global ban on anti-personnel landmines.

Bangladesh is happy to be among the first countries to join in sponsoring a draft resolution proposing the conclusion of an agreement on the global ban of anti-personnel landmines. We would like to underline that negotiation on the proposed agreement should not lose sight of the humanitarian question, that is, of rehabilitation of the victims of landmines, particularly women and children. Saving future generations from the scourge of these treacherous weapons is obviously a humanitarian imperative, but making this noble initiative relevant to millions of victims and their families is perhaps equally important.

In conclusion, I would like to raise two aspects of the question of disarmament and international security, lest the euphoria at our achievements in reducing or eliminating some weapons of mass destruction relegate to second place the overriding objectives of disarmament and international security.

The first aspect is the question of regional disarmament. In today's emerging multi-polar world, regional disarmament presents new challenges. The continued arms race, contingent upon unresolved problems, is a formidable source of threats to security and is draining considerable resources from many countries. It is our belief that while regional confidence-building measures can go a long way, true regional disarmament largely depends on an understanding at the global level and courageous gestures from major Powers. Regional disarmament will not progress unless the legitimate security concerns of other States are adequately addressed.

The second aspect is the link between disarmament and development. It would appear that the decisions of the tenth special session of the General Assembly and of the 1987 International Conference on the question have taken retreat, if not gone totally into oblivion. Bangladesh wants this to be the primary focus of the preparations for a fourth special session devoted to disarmament and of the session itself.

Let me recall in this connection that at the forty-seventh session the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) submitted a report, as requested by the Assembly, on the economic aspects of disarmament. The report contained many conclusions which should be revisited. In quoting the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report* of 1992, the UNIDIR report stated that a three-per-cent annual cut in the military spending of rich and poor countries throughout the 1990s could yield a "peace dividend" of $1.5 trillion for human development by the year 2000. The time is now possibly more than ripe to ask loud and clear the question of where the peace dividend that the end of the cold war had so emphatically promised has gone.

The deliberations in the First Committee should not lose this perspective, for no one would argue that disarmament is an end in itself. It cannot be overemphasized that a more secure world and durable peace can be built only through increased investment in human security. There is value in addressing non-military threats to international peace and security, as a second half-century perspective plan would be too long-term for too many nations of the world, causing uncertainty and agony for millions of men and women.

The Chairman: I call on the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Küng (International Committee of the Red Cross): A great deal has occurred this year in relation to the regulation of both conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. Actually, there is no such dual categorization of arms in international humanitarian law, which regulates all weapons in accordance with certain generally applicable rules in order to prevent excessive suffering and destruction. All of the work and comments of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with regard to weapons, whatever their nature from a strategic standpoint, are aimed at ensuring the faithful and impartial application of these rules of international humanitarian law.

On 3 May of this year, the First Review Conference of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects amended Protocol II, which regulates the use of landmines. The ICRC has had the privilege, in keeping with its statutory mandate, of participating actively in this process.

The ICRC warmly welcomes a number of improvements in the landmines Protocol, in particular its extension to apply in both international and non-international armed conflicts. Unfortunately, the new limitations on the use of anti-personnel mines are both weak and complex, and there is hence a danger that these provisions will not be implemented in the types of conflict in which most recent use has occurred. In particular, poorly trained or poorly equipped forces may be unwilling or unable to abide by a complex set of rules or pay an increased price for self-destructing mines.

The ICRC will promote adherence to the Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. This Protocol is intended to restrict the use of mines; it is not meant to encourage States to use mines or to invest in new types of mines. We urge States to go far beyond the provisions of the Protocol and to renounce the production, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines.

In March of this year, the ICRC published a study which concluded that the limited military value of anti-personnel mines is far outweighed by their human, economic and social costs. This study has already been distributed by our delegation and more copies are available to anyone who is interested.

Many States have already demonstrated that the end of the landmines crisis need not await a globally negotiated consensus. The Agenda for Action prepared by the Ottawa Conference early this month demonstrates how much can be done towards ending the landmines crisis through moral and political leadership. We welcome the establishment of the Ottawa Group, made up of some 50 States which committed themselves in their final declaration to promoting and implementing, initially on the national and regional levels, the global prohibition and elimination of anti-personnel mines.

In this spirit, 25 States have already renounced or suspended the use of these weapons by their own armed forces, and 11 States are destroying their stockpiles. The Ottawa Group's dynamic agenda for the coming year stresses the urgency of both regional and global efforts, while highlighting the need to combine moves to achieve a ban with increased assistance for mine clearance and for the care and rehabilitation of victims.

We strongly support Canada's initiative in inviting Foreign Ministers to Ottawa in December 1997 to sign a new treaty totally prohibiting anti-personnel mines. We consider this step to be a major breakthrough and encourage States to respond favourably to the Canadian invitation. This initiative properly places the Ottawa Agenda for Action and other international initiatives in the context of urgent efforts to achieve a treaty banning these pernicious weapons. Even if such a treaty does not at first attract universal adherence, as has been the case with most new instruments, it will help create an important new norm.

In the context of the General Assembly the ICRC would advocate the adoption of the strongest possible resolutions, which would, first, unequivocally support a global ban on and the elimination of anti-personnel mines; secondly, call on States to end the production, use and transfer of such arms by a specific date in the very near future; thirdly, encourage the establishment of regional zones free of these weapons, pending the adoption of a global ban; and finally, call for a significant increase in assistance for mine clearance and for the care and rehabilitation of victims.

The ICRC would again like to express its concern at the virtually unrestrained transfer of weapons and, in particular, small arms. Our experience in conflicts around the world is that enormous quantities of light weapons are available to virtually any individual or group which seeks them and that they are all too often used in flagrant violation of the norms of humanitarian law. Implementation of this law is made more difficult by the day as deadly weapons fall into more and more hands. In the coming year the ICRC will undertake a study, requested by the twenty-sixth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, on the relationship between arms availability and violations of humanitarian law. We will also be increasingly involved in dialogue on this issue within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement.

The ICRC considers the adoption of Additional Protocol IV prohibiting the use of blinding laser weapons to be a landmark achievement of the recent review process of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Not only does it prohibit an abhorrent new means of warfare, but it also means that, for only the second time in history,

the international community has been able to proscribe a potentially inhumane weapon before having to witness its effects on the battlefield.The ICRC encourages States to adhere to this new Protocol at the earliest opportunity and, when they do so, to make a formal declaration of their understanding that the provisions of Protocol IV shall apply in all circumstances. Such a declaration would reflect the understanding reached when the Protocol was adopted that it should apply not only to international armed conflicts.

The rapid advances in the technology required to produce portable blinding laser weapons highlights the need for States meticulously to review the development of new weapons in keeping with their obligation to determine whether their employment would be prohibited by the rules of international humanitarian law. The ICRC, as the guardian of this body of law, will continue to follow such developments. The coming decades will undoubtedly see the emergence of new capabilities for the deployment of arms the nature of which would undermine this law and whose use humanity would come to regret. Additional Protocol IV demonstrates that the international community can act to prevent such developments.

The ICRC welcomes the imminent entry into force of the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention and urges all States which have not yet done so to become parties to it. Likewise, we encourage States to adhere to the Biological Weapons Convention, which, like the Chemical Weapons Convention, strengthens the Geneva Protocol of 1925, which banned the use of chemical and biological weapons. We urge States parties to equip the Biological Weapons Convention, at the upcoming Review Conference, with the most effective possible mechanisms for transparency, monitoring and verification.

Finally, we would like to comment briefly on the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons. This was the first time that the International Court of Justice analysed at some length international humanitarian law governing the use of weapons. We were pleased to see the reaffirmation of certain rules which the Court defined as "intransgressible" (A/51/218, annex, para. 79), in particular the absolute prohibition on the use of weapons that are by their nature indiscriminate, as well as the prohibition of the use of weapons that cause unnecessary suffering. We also welcome the Court's emphasis that humanitarian law applies to all weapons without exception, including new ones. In this context we would like to underline that there is no exception to the application of these rules, whatever the circumstances. International humanitarian law is itself the last barrier against the kind of barbarity and horror that can all too easily occur in wartime, and it applies equally to all parties to a conflict at all times.

Turning to the nature of nuclear weapons, we note that, on the basis of the scientific evidence submitted, the Court found that

> "The destructive power of nuclear weapons cannot be contained in either space or time ... The radiation released by a nuclear explosion would affect health, agriculture, natural resources and demography over a very wide area. Further, the use of nuclear weapons would be a serious danger to future generations." (*ibid., para. 35*)

In the light of this, the ICRC finds it difficult to envisage how a use of nuclear weapons could be compatible with the rules of international law. We are convinced that because of their devastating effects no one ever wants to see these weapons used. It is the ICRC's hope that the opinion of the Court will give fresh impetus to the international community's efforts to rid humanity of this terrible threat.

Ms. Tan (Singapore): This is not merely the first time that my delegation has asked to speak at this session. On a more personal note, it is the first time I have attended the First Committee. It is in fact the first time I have attended the General Assembly. Let me therefore not only, Sir, as is customary, congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election, but more personally, crave your indulgence and that of colleagues should my youth and inexperience lead me astray.

It is almost seven years since the Berlin Wall came down. It has been five years since the Soviet Union passed into history. There has been ample time for us to realize that the end of the cold war has not changed the fundamental dynamic of an international system of sovereign States. Even one of my tender years can see all too plainly how the major Powers still stubbornly defend their privileges; how a web of ambition and vested interests still stymie many worthy efforts at international disarmament.

But perhaps I am still young enough to believe in the importance of vision. In any case, I represent a young country. We support the proposal of 28 delegations to the Conference on Disarmament for a programme of action for the elimination of all nuclear weapons, even though in

practice progress in nuclear disarmament has been, at best, piecemeal or partial.

Before I am labelled a pessimist, let me hasten to add that in this vale of tears and tangled web of ambitions that we call the international system perhaps what has been achieved since the end of the cold war is the best that can be achieved. Perhaps the only way forward is through a pragmatic, eclectic and flexible approach that some will inevitably criticize as piecemeal but that others call realistic. It was in this spirit that Singapore supported the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We do not believe that these are inconsequential steps, even though there are clearly many more steps to be taken before our vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world becomes a reality. They are building blocks towards that end.

In drawing attention to the essentially unchanged aspects of the international system, my perhaps-naive intention was to stress the importance of understanding clearly, unsentimentally and without illusions why certain things have occurred, why certain initiatives are possible at a particular point in time but not at an earlier point in time. I am perhaps still of an age to believe that such knowledge is valuable for its own sake.

A case in point is the very important initiative taken by this Committee on landmines. This is undoubtedly a horrendous problem that requires urgent attention. In May of this year Singapore declared a two-year moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines that have no self-destruct or self-neutralizing mechanism. Of course, with some 110 million active landmines in the world, ours is but a very modest step. Nevertheless, it is one made in the true spirit of wanting to lower the risk of civilian deaths and mutilations.

We support and will continue to support initiatives against landmines. Nevertheless, we have never made any secret of our position. It is stated clearly for all to read on pages 15 and 16 of document A/51/313 of 28 August 1996. In that document, while announcing our moratorium, we also stated that we shared the view expressed by several countries last year that it is not practical to have a blanket ban on all types of anti-personnel landmines, since many countries see the need for anti-personnel landmines for legitimate self-defence purposes. Further, attempts to eliminate anti-personnel landmines altogether could be counter-productive if some countries regarded such moves as a threat to their security.

We were therefore extremely gratified to read in document A/C.1/51/7 of 10 October 1996 that one major Power apparently shared our view. That country confirmed its decision to refrain from producing and exporting anti-personnel landmines and to work towards a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. But it also said that it would refrain from the use of anti-personnel landmines except "where such use is absolutely necessary to protect its forces" (*A/C.1/51/7, annex, p. 2*). Exactly.

We were further delighted to read on pages 16 to 18 of document A/51/313 that another major Power, active in pushing for a comprehensive ban on all kinds of mines, argued for an exception for anti-personnel mines "until alternatives become available" (*A/51/313, p. 17*), and that it had begun:

> "a programme of research, procurement and other measures needed to eliminate the requirement for these exceptions and to permit both the United States and our allies to end the reliance on anti-personnel landmines as soon as possible". (*ibid.*)

We are truly grateful for this frank statement that what lies behind the initiative for a global ban on all kinds of landmines is not merely superior virtue but superior technology. The state of weapons research is now such as to make it realistically possible for the technologically advanced countries to contemplate discarding landmines as a weapon of defence without compromising their security. It is perhaps only just that this should be so. It was also, after all, superior technology that made possible the indiscriminate sowing of landmines, for example by air or artillery. This had in many cases made it impossible to comply with the established international law governing mine warfare, thus eventually eroding that regime and promoting the indiscriminate use of landmines.

I do not want to be misunderstood. I am not against the initiative in this Committee to promote a global ban. Indeed, it has become easier for us and perhaps many other countries to support such an initiative because it is now clear that there will be exceptions in the interim and that technological innovations are under way that would eventually render landmines obsolete as a weapon of self-defence.

But since every country, and not just the major or technologically advanced Powers, has legitimate security interests, I hope that the technologically advanced countries will be generous enough to share their technology so that everyone, and not just a favoured few, can protect their

legitimate security interests without recourse to what is undoubtedly a horrendous and inhumane weapon. This will make a global ban on landmines a truly feasible goal.

In drawing attention to the fact that the cold war was not the only obstacle to global disarmament efforts, it is not my intention to downplay the importance of the end of the cold war. Of course it was a profoundly significant event. In our region, South-East Asia, it was the end of the cold war that enabled the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), after many years of negotiations, to achieve its long-standing goal of a South-East Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone. This represents an important step towards, and is a central component of, a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality in South-East Asia. These developments would not have been possible in a cold-war context.

During the cold war, the essential security problem facing countries in the region was how to avoid getting entangled in great-Power conflicts. The nuclear-weapon-free zone and the zone of peace, freedom and neutrality in South-East Asia were then, perhaps naively, regarded as essentially exclusionary concepts designed to insulate the region from great-Power competition. Needless to say, the great Powers had other ideas. Today, both zones have been redefined as essentially inclusionary steps designed to integrate all Powers as essential components of the regional security architecture. They promote a predictable and constructive pattern of great- and regional-Power relationships to preserve peace, stability and prosperity.

Colleagues will recall that another essential component of the zone of peace, freedom and neutrality, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-East Asia, was endorsed by the General Assembly in October 1992. I am pleased to announce that we are at work on an instrument that will allow external Powers to associate themselves with and accede to both the zone of peace, freedom and neutrality and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. When this work is completed, the South-East Asia security foundation for the next century will be in place.

As befitting my years, let me conclude on another optimistic note. My delegation welcomes and supports the initiative of Brazil to promote a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere. In drawing explicit linkages between nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa, Latin America, the South Pacific and South-East Asia, that initiative seems to us to be a good example of the kind of pragmatic but visionary building-block approach that my delegation believes is the only way forward. We urge all colleagues to join us in supporting it.

Mr. Naranjo Villalobos (Costa Rica)(*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Costa Rica is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over the work of the First Committee at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I should like to say that we are convinced that under your skilful guidance the Committee will successfully discharge its mandate. To that end, you may count on the cooperation of Costa Rica.

I should like to begin by referring to my own country. Costa Rica follows a policy of disarmament of its own free will. Almost 50 years ago, under the illustrious leadership of then-President José Figueres Ferrer, Costa Rica abolished its armed forces and decided to devote the resources previously allocated to the military budget to the development process and, most fundamentally, to investing in our society.

There can be no doubt that Costa Rican history is rather atypical; in no way do we expect it to be duplicated throughout the world, as we understand and accept the heterogeneity of various political models. I would nonetheless like to point out that political democracy has been consolidated in Costa Rica through economic development and social well-being. The elimination of our armed forces and the demilitarization of our society have fostered a broad, pluralistic, representative system in the form of a democratic and social state of law, which is the legal structure representing the will for peace, conciliation and harmonious coexistence Costa Ricans have chosen.

It is not by chance that one of Costa Rica's fundamental foreign policy goals is that of disarmament, both nuclear and conventional. Our experience has convinced us that organized international society should also devote its efforts to achieving this noble goal.

The world stands at the threshold of the twenty-first century, which will be an age of great technological progress. However, the advances that lie ahead will make sense only in the context of peace among all nations and with a view to the development and progress of humanity. Disarmament is imperative for securing this new world.

This is why we view with interest and enthusiasm the progress that has been made in this area over the last year. In the course of the past 12 months, several events have occurred that fill us with enthusiasm and hope, because they prove beyond question that the majority of this

Organization's Member States favour nuclear and conventional disarmament.

Costa Rica participated in the work that culminated in the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This action taken by the international community not only sent a clear message, but also provided impetus for subsequent actions that at first seemed implausible but today are realities. But we cannot become complacent; the Member States of the United Nations must break the bonds of the past. Four years from the new millennium, there must be a new attitude in support of absolute, unconditional nuclear disarmament. In this regard, one can never repeat too often that nuclear weapons are incompatible with the true spirit of humanity.

Without nuclear disarmament, our great progress and the great leap forward to the third millennium lose all meaning. The twenty-first century must be a century of comprehensive peace. This is why Costa Rica believes that the time has come to initiate negotiations within the United Nations on the total and unconditional abolition of nuclear weapons. In this connection, we would like to give our full and unconditional support to Malaysia's initiative in the General Assembly.

For my country, 8 July of this year was a special day: on that day the International Court of Justice handed down its Advisory Opinion on the legality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Costa Rica appeared twice before the Court to express its views on this matter. On one of those occasions, the President of the Republic, José María Figueres Olsen, spoke resoundingly of Costa Ricans' opposition to nuclear weapons. Although we felt that the Court might have gone farther, the opinion filled us with satisfaction, as its content clearly delegitimizes the use of nuclear weapons.

Costa Rica agrees with His Excellency the President of the Court that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons has a destabilizing effect on international humanitarian law. Above all, Costa Rica endorses the need for the Members of the United Nations to initiate negotiations in good faith, on nuclear disarmament in all its aspects and to establish strict and effective international controls on nuclear weapons.

In this connection, since it was the General Assembly that requested the Court's opinion, Costa Rica urges all Member States to support the draft resolution on follow-up to that Advisory Opinion, which has been distributed to delegations.

Costa Rica would also like to emphasize the great significance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which has already been signed by more than two thirds of Member States, and would like to add its voice to those in the general debate and in this Committee that have asked the countries that have yet to sign the Treaty to do so as soon as possible. My country believes that, in accordance with international law and in compliance with the majority will of the international community, all States should modify their behaviour and refrain from any actions that would run counter to the content of the Treaty, particularly during this period prior to its entry into force.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty must be observed in good faith. Costa Rica will pay close attention in this regard and believes that verification and control instruments should become operational as soon as possible. As a symbolic contribution, the Costa Rican seismological stations will participate in this noble international endeavour.

Costa Rica would like to reaffirm its unconditional support for the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which establishes a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America, and takes great pleasure in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia, through the Treaty of Bangkok, and in Africa, through the Treaty of Pelindaba. Thus has a vast area of the world been freed from the threat of nuclear annihilation.

For these reasons, Costa Rica supports the creation of a broad region called "The nuclear-weapon-free Southern Hemisphere and adjacent areas" on the basis of a proposal for resolutions put forward by Brazil, which should include a total ban on the transport and transfer of nuclear materials for bellicose purposes and of atomic waste.

As regards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, Costa Rica believes it would be highly significant if an agreement could be reached between the States of the region so that the Holy Land, where Armageddon could be unleashed, can also be free from the threat of nuclear destruction. Costa Rica calls upon the States of the Middle East to do their utmost to protect that land of profound, sacred significance for humanity.

In the area of conventional disarmament, Costa Rica attaches highest priority to the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. My country has deposited

the instrument of ratification of that Convention and plans to participate actively in the next session, to be held in November. In this connection, Costa Rica invites those States that have not already done so to conclude the process of ratification and pronounces itself in favour of the broadest possible international participation in the November conference, and especially in favour of significant opportunities for non-governmental organizations to participate actively.

Insofar as biological weapons are concerned, Costa Rica supports the adoption of a protocol strengthening the Convention on biological and toxin weapons and providing the international community with appropriate verification machinery.

Costa Rica, being situated in Central America and having suffered the effects of the wars of the last decade, is deeply concerned about anti-personnel landmines. My country is aware of the destructive effects of these weapons on innocent and defenceless individuals, who lose their lives while trying to cultivate their lands or are mutilated when they step on a mine.

There are more than 100 million active anti-personnel landmines planted throughout the world, most of which are in developing countries. There can be no intermediate positions on this issue. While we supported draft resolutions of a declarative nature on this issue in past years, we believe the time has come for the United Nations to take clear and forceful decisions on this matter.

Those who have favoured and supported the planting of anti-personnel mines in the past must now assume their responsibility and participate actively in the demining processes under way. Costa Rica has received several texts of draft resolutions on this issue. However, we are surprised at the lack of clear identifications of compelling actions that would demonstrate a universal will to confront and resolve this serious problem.

Turning to another matter, Costa Rica is greatly concerned at the growth in the international arms trade. Six years ago we sang the praises of the bright future of peace dividends. The cold war had ended; low-intensity conflicts had lessened. Nevertheless, international arms trade increases, making it difficult for developing countries to allocate more of their resources to the establishment of justice, well-being and equity. My country rejects that sad reality and wishes to draw the attention of the Member States of this Organization to the situation.

The achievement of complete and unconditional disarmament is the obligation of all. For this reason, Costa Rica offers its full support for the proposal submitted by Ireland and supported by many Member States, with a view to increasing the number of States participating in the Conference on Disarmament. Today my country wishes to express its clear interest in participating in the enormous tasks carried out by that forum.

In the course of the proceedings of the First Committee, Costa Rica will express its opinion on the various items on the agenda. However, I considered this an appropriate occasion to express our views on certain general aspects. I have done so from a positive perspective, as is appropriate for a small unilaterally disarmed country, that fully appreciates the contributions this Committee has made and will continue to make.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.